

LAUSD Parent Advisory Committee

Chairperson's Report

May 11, 2023

Hello, colleagues:

In case you hadn't noticed, the school year is rapidly coming to a close — we have only 21 instructional days left before our kiddos enjoy a long vacation, unless they're in summer session. The PAC year is also winding down, when our Committee will meet in person with Superintendent Carvalho one day after our "Reflection and Recognition" event, at a location to be announced.

Your Executive Board officers will be giving the second of two presentations on May 16th at the Board Committee of the Whole, to lift up important topics on District LCAP Goals 3, 4, 5, and 6. Among these, Goal 4, *Parent, Community and Student Engagement*, received even more ThoughtExchange entries than the other three combined. This makes perfect sense, when you consider that most of our lived experience as LAUSD parents occurs at our children's schools.

Next, in March 2023, Public Advocates and ACLU Southern California published *Realizing the Promise of LCFF: Recommendations from the First Ten Years*. Using 72 school districts as case studies, this report reviews implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula to offer guidance on improving equitable outcomes and community engagement throughout California.

Signed into law by Gov. Jerry Brown in November 2013, LCFF is one of the boldest public education experiments any state has ever taken to improve student outcomes through greater equity, transparency, local accountability, and meaningful community engagement. Over the past decade, the LCFF has fundamentally changed how public schools are funded and held accountable. However, as *Realizing the Promise* uncovers, the *real* promise of LCFF — addressing systemic inequities that create barriers to student success — has not yet been fulfilled.

While this report does highlight some bright spots, it also underscores the need for significant innovation in order to strengthen accountability measures that can ensure a comprehensive strategic-planning process and better engagement. Its top recommendations include these:

- More oversight, support, and authority for County Offices of Education (COEs) to hold school districts accountable
- Investing in an innovative, usable, web-based strategic planning platform that can make funding transparent and easier to understand
- Strengthening community engagement with families, students, and community-based organizations to meaningfully address disparities in student outcomes and improve opportunities for all students, including Black students

You can download *Realizing the Promise of LCFF: Recommendations from the First Ten Years* here:

publicadvocates.org/realizing-the-promise-of-lcff-recommendations-from-the-first-ten-years

Now to a topic which makes me very hesitant to consider mentioning it here. However, in the spirit of “transparency” and “accountability” — two concepts that parents are *always* asking of LAUSD — I will reveal this concern to you now. In short, it has come to my attention in the last 24 hours that our regular, annual process of developing LCAP Comments, a process laid out in our Bylaws, was cut short by District leadership whose identities I do not yet know. This unilateral decision to artificially manipulate our Committee’s very purpose, which is specified in the California Education Code, at the very least undermines the trust which parents should have for their school district. To say I’m disappointed with this turn of events would be putting it mildly.

The ThoughtExchange platform being used since last year to gather member input on the presentations we’ve seen was closed after accepting a grand total of 201 entries from us. As I’ve been careful to point out to you all from the start, these entries are *not* finished LCAP Comments but rather the actual thoughts of our colleagues. What we see in this universe of entries are in some cases not able to stand on their own, let alone be used as fully developed LCAP Comments.

With this being the case, officers were expecting to meet at least once, and possibly twice, to engage in a process of reviewing as a group all 201 raw entries, combining those we could see that were very similar. We would then have taken this smaller collection of combined entries to strengthen them, giving additional detail we believe would help these combinations express the voice of members in a more powerful way. Finally, we were planning to examine everything for spelling, grammar, and syntax, polishing each entry to a high gloss. These polished gems would then have been presented to you as the set of our Comments on the LAUSD 2023-24 draft LCAP.

Sadly, this process would not be allowed to run its course, interrupted by a decision that only the bullet-point “themes” brought out in the two PAC presentations to our Board Committee of the Whole would be used by Supt. Carvalho in formulating responses to be delivered to us when we meet with him on Friday, May 26th. This means that instead of some much greater number of Comments on any of eight District LCAP Goals, our significant recommendations to the Superintendent are now *limited to only three per Goal*. This gives us a total universe of $3 \times 8 = 24$ items as the sum total of our PAC LCAP Comments. Again, twenty-four LCAP Comments. *Really?*

In closing, parents are reminded by principals and others in LAUSD that we are “equal partners” in the education of our children. Yet sometimes what we see happening makes us wonder if our District, the one that educates our children, actually believes this slogan. A friendly suggestion: We who give our time to improve outcomes for students *and* parents should be asking questions.

At your service,

Paul Robak

Chairperson, 2022-2023

LAUSD Parent Advisory Committee

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